

Protestantism

A brief overview of the History of Protestant Christianity

During the Middle Ages the Roman Catholic Church held a virtual monopoly of faith in Western Europe. However, between the 14th and 17th centuries a series of Northern European reforms led to what is now called the “Protestant Reformation” culminating in a mass exodus from the near total control of Christianity from Rome. The Reformation began in 1517 when Martin Luther, an Augustinian monk, nailed 95 propositions to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. These proposals for reform challenged many contemporary church practices. Committed to the idea that salvation only could be reached through faith and “divine grace”, Luther compiled the list of grievances known as the “Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences” -- The 95 Theses.

The 95 Theses, which would become foundational to the Protestant Reformation, were written in a questioning rather than accusatory tone. The first two theses contained Luther’s central belief that God intended believers to seek repentance and that faith alone, not deeds, would lead to salvation. Many other theses criticized the practice of indulgences, the granting of full or partial remission of the punishment of sin from direct payments to the Church.

At the time Luther had no intention of starting a new Christian tradition but hoped to reform the Catholic Church. That was not to be. Instead of Catholic reformation, a new tradition - Protestantism - evolved in the decades that followed as Luther's arguments took root all while the Catholic Church resisted change. Luther developed the doctrine of justification by faith alone, where one’s salvation can be secured only through faith rather than through individual good works or the intercession of any church.

Many of the origins of Protestant ideas come from the Dutch Renaissance figure and social critic Desiderius Erasmus. Perhaps his key contribution was his urging the people of his time to think and reason for themselves. He is often referred to as one of the greatest Christian humanists. Another contribution of Erasmus was the publication of his Greek-Latin New Testament, published in 1516, which Luther used primarily to translate the bible from its original Latin into German. The availability of non-clerical laypeople to digest the actual content of the New Testament helped spur the increasing popularity of the Reformation.

Erasmus also laid the foundation for the Reformation not only by the translation of the New Testament but with the spread of his humanistic beliefs. Led by Erasmus, other thinkers, as well as the masses of church followers condemned the corruption of the Roman Church. Erasmus contended that true religion depends on one’s inward devotion rather than the outward displays of ceremony. By favoring the moral reform of the church and de-emphasizing the practice of didactic ritual, Erasmus laid the groundwork for Luther. Although Erasmus remained a Catholic throughout his life, he never gave up the quest for widespread Church reform. He has been

referred to as the intellectual father of the Reformation; in fact, historians have coined the phrase “Erasmus laid the egg that Luther hatched.”

As the Reformation developed in Germany, various groups in other parts of Europe began to break away from the Catholic Church. Reformed Christianity developed in Switzerland based on the teachings of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin. When it spread to Scotland under John Knox, the Reformed faith became known as “Presbyterianism.” Switzerland was also the birthplace of the Anabaptists, spiritual ancestors of today's Amish, Mennonites, Quakers, and Baptists.

Anglicanism, yet another protestant sect, was established in 1534 when Henry VIII of England broke away from the authority of the Pope. Anglicans became known as Episcopalians in America. Anglicanism itself has its roots in the Celtic Christianity of the earliest Britons and the Roman form of the faith brought to English churches in the 5th and 6th centuries. The Norman conquest of 1066 opened up English churches to German and Scandinavian pressure for church reform. Growing English dissatisfaction with papal authority and King Henry’s desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon were key elements contributing to England’s eventual break with the apostolic church. The subsequent Methodist tradition, based on the teachings of John Wesley, has its roots in Anglicanism.

With its emphasis on individual interpretation of scripture and a measure of religious freedom, the Reformation marked not only a break between Protestantism and Catholicism, but the beginning of Christian denominationalism as we know it today. While the major branches of Christianity basically hold the same fundamental creed, there are significant differences. While the Eastern Orthodox and Roman traditions combine the Scripture with the authority of church tradition or of a pope, Protestants prefer the Bible and individual consideration as the source of authority rather than church hierarchy.

For the first time in post Catholic Christianity, Protestantism encouraged people to think for themselves and draw their own conclusions from scripture, rather than willfully accepting the interpretation and teachings of canonical authorities. It is this process of independent thinking that was a competent of western thought that lead to the modern humanist movement.

THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

There are two primary dimensions of Protestant Christianity: ecclesiastical and secular. The latter focuses on social teachings, many of which are inclined toward humanism. While the motivation and inducements traditionally differ, Protestantism and humanism share many social goals. While the prime traditional motivator in Christianity is to please God, not all modern Christians see it that way. Today more and more agree with humanists that serving humankind should be the key motivating factor.

Scholars have defined the basic Protestant religious doctrines in various ways. Luther, as noted, advanced the principles that salvation is achieved by faith alone and that religious authority

rests in scripture alone. While there still is diversity within and those who've taken their own approaches, these are the five doctrinal points that determine official Protestantism:

-- Doctrine is "by Scripture alone" as opposed to papal decree or council edict. *Sola Scriptura*

-- Justification is received "by faith alone" as opposed to works or sacraments. *Sola Fide*

-- Salvation comes "by grace alone." *Sola Gratia*

-- Atonement for sins is "by and through Christ alone." *Sola Christus*

-- All glory is to be given "to God alone." *Soli Deo Gloria*

Source: Basic Protestant Beliefs (<https://suite.io/brian-tubbs/1r1820v>)

These principles can be further limited to two: first, Nothing written by theologians that is not directly related to Biblical text can claim to have the same authority as the Bible itself and individuals can interpret the bible as they see fit; and second no person need depend on a clergyperson to mediate their relationship to and sense of God.

In her piece titled "Liberal Protestant Beliefs", which appeared in OpposingViews.com, an independent media site that publishes articles on politics, social issues and religion, Pamela Ellgen indicates that "Liberal Protestants come from various denominations, particularly mainline denominations.... However, denominations do not define liberal Protestants; it is their underlying perspectives on truth, Jesus, morality and salvation that shape their beliefs."

Ellgen then presented the following liberal Protestant beliefs:

-- Perspectives on truth: "Many liberal Protestants believe that the Bible is a piece of literature about God more so than the literal word of God and that it should be read in its historical context.... Other liberal Protestants see the Bible as the word of God but approach it more broadly and believe it is open to various interpretations."

-- Beliefs about Jesus: "... prominent liberal theologian Marcus Borg dismisses the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus on earth as inconsequential to the faith. He has written that "Easter is not about believing in a spectacular long ago event, but about participating in what we see in Jesus."

-- Attitudes on morality: Liberal Protestants see Jesus' teachings as foundational to morality and ethics. They embrace his teaching on caring for the poor and accepting the marginalized in society. According to the website Beliefnet Liberal Protestants are more likely to be pro-choice and open to gay rights

-- Beliefs about salvation: Some liberal Protestants have moved away from the concept of original sin and view humanity as fundamentally good with the free will to make good or bad choices. Salvation is less about a one-time event and more about a lifelong endeavor.

Source: Liberal Protestant Beliefs (<http://people.opposingviews.com/liberal-protestant-beliefs-2093.html>)

Social teachings. A great deal has been written – in a variety of formats – about Protestant social teachings. Below are illustrations from five of the mainline Protestant denominations.

Baptist. Baptists maintain that Christians have responsibility to apply gospel teachings to all of life. They assert that, “The application of the principles of Christianity to social conditions calls for both ministry and social action.... Ministry involves efforts to heal the hurts of people -- spiritual, physical, mental and emotional. Social action involves efforts to change the circumstances which cause the hurts. Ministry is corrective in focus. Social action is preventive. For example, feeding people who are starving is a form of ministry. Working to eliminate the cause of the hunger is a type of social action.” Baptists acknowledge that they have utilized boycotts and public demonstrations to bring about social change, for example, during the campaigns for racial justice. They also join with other denominations to deal with specific social problems such as child abuse and violations of religious freedom.

Source: Baptists: Applying the Gospel | Baptist Distinctives
(www.baptistdistinctives.org/articles/baptists-applying-the-gospel/)

Episcopal. The Episcopal Church has an international thrust. The Episcopal Partnership for Global Mission, a network of more than 70 independent and church-wide agencies, focuses on missions in the larger Anglican Communion. Social-oriented activities include the following: **Relief and development.** These programs support the Millennium Development Goals by alleviating hunger, creating economic opportunities, responding to disasters, and fighting diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria.

Advocacy for Human Rights, Justice, and Peace. The Office of Government Relations of the Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C., spends about 40% of its time and resources on international matters. It works directly with the executive and legislative branches of the U. S. government and with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. It is also involved in debt relief, the global AIDS pandemic, and conflict resolution in Africa and the Middle East. Other areas of social-oriented activism include women’s rights, religious freedom, and development assistance (the Millennium Development Goals).

Source: Social Justice Policies of the Episcopal Church
(<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/social-justice-policies-episcopal-church>)

Lutheran. At the request of the South Wisconsin District Board of Trustees to provide direction for the church in social action Dr. Herbert Berner crafted “The Church and Social Action.” We have selected what we believe are the most relevant of Fifteen statements. Since they are quite lengthy, we have included the most pertinent items from the following statements:

- This unselfish concern involves a relationship between employers and employees. This calls for proper working conditions, fair wages and employment practices.
- Love for the neighbor requires a concern for proper housing and living conditions and practices which result in refusing or dispossessing people of other races, the unfortunate and the poverty-stricken, including excessive rental charges, failure to keep the property in adequate repair with respect to safety and health requirements.
- Christians are to focus on the conditions of the world in which they live and provide energetic leadership in initiating and implementing sound social action programs.
- The methods of implementing the principles vary.... Some engage in marches and peaceful

demonstrations; others make their appeals by communicating with leaders and legislators.

Source: Guidelines for Social Concerns for Congregations and Members of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src.)

Methodist. “Our Social Creed” includes the following points:

- We affirm the natural world as God’s handiwork and dedicate ourselves to its preservation, enhancement, and faithful use by humankind.
- We joyfully receive for ourselves and others the blessings of community, sexuality, marriage, and the family.
- We commit ourselves to the rights of men, women, children, youth, young adults, the aging, and people with disabilities; to improvement of the quality of life; and to the rights and dignity of all persons.
- We believe in the right and duty of persons to work for the glory of God and the good of themselves and others and in the protection of their welfare in so doing; in the rights to property as a trust from God, collective bargaining, and responsible consumption; and in the elimination of economic and social distress.
- We dedicate ourselves to peace throughout the world, to the rule of justice and law among nations, and to individual freedom for all people of the world.

Source: Social Principles of The United Methodist Church: 2009-2012
(<http://www.umcsc.org/PDF/SocialPrinciples.pdf>)

Presbyterian. The Presbyterian News Service provided an overview of the church’s position on social matters which outlined issues considered at their General Assembly in 2014. The Assembly, held in Detroit, provided a backdrop for a number of pertinent issues relating to reviving the nation’s urban areas. In a report on “The Gospel from Detroit: Renewing the Church’s Urban Vision”, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy asked the Assembly to commend Presbyterians who “embody an urban Christian vision” and encourage presbyteries to study the histories of their city congregations in order to “renew their own urban strategies in response to existing racial and economic inequity and to new urban demographic, economic and transportation dynamics....” The report called for a comprehensive review of the church’s social teachings which focus on an urban mission. A proposal from the Advocacy Committee on Racial Ethnic Concerns called on the Presbyterian Mission Agency to develop an anti-racism policy, create and implement a church-wide anti-racism training program, and recommended that all mid-councils and congregations provide anti-racism training and dialogue. Source: General Assembly backgrounder: mission coordination -- June 10, 2014
(<http://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/6/10/general-assembly-backgrounder-mission-coordination/>)

It goes without saying that churches in these denominations are involved in specific grassroots efforts in their communities. One brief example: The Northside Presbyterian Church in Blacksburg, Virginia provides approximately 11% of its annual budget to projects such as the Blacksburg Back to School Program which buys school clothing for children of low-income families; the Blacksburg Interfaith Food Pantry where church members volunteer several days each month; the Children’s Dental Program which provides dental care to children and adults

with Medicaid, low-income Medicare recipients, and uninsured children and adults; and the “To Our House” program which provides winter shelter for single adult men.

As noted above, while Protestants and humanists share many of the same social action goals, the motivation and inducements traditionally differ. However, what is most important is the end result. We surely concur with Protestant teachings that social action programs must be both corrective and preventative. In the section below we will further expand this position.

THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF HUMANISM

There are numerous statements by individuals and organizations in the United States and elsewhere that express the principles of humanism. Many focus on social action, for example:

-- We are concerned with securing justice and fairness in society and with eliminating discrimination and intolerance. Council for Secular Humanism
(<http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php/12>)

-- Humanists call for the continued improvement of society so that no one may be deprived of the basic necessities of life, and for institutions and conditions to provide every person with opportunities for developing their full potential. What Is Humanism? (http://www.humanists-london.org/What_is_Humanism.html)

-- Humanists affirm that individual and social problems can only be resolved by means of human reason, intelligent effort, critical thinking joined with compassion and a spirit of empathy for all living beings. Twelve Principles of Humanism (www.humanistcanada.com)

-- Humanism values actions that will promote the establishment of “democracy, peace, and a high standard of living” throughout the world. Humanism as an Instructional Paradigm
(<http://www-distance.syr.edu/romaral.html>)

-- Humanism should develop an attitude of compassion to those in a state of suffering from whatever cause that leads to the suffering, and seek to engage in action that alleviates this suffering. The Core Principles of Secular Humanism by Victor A. Gunasekara
(<http://www.vgweb.org/manussa/coreprin.htm>)

We suggest that you go to the sources indicated for more complete listings of the key principles of humanism. The principles, to be sure, cover a wide array of humanist concerns. We have drawn from several statements and include a number of them below.

From Humanist Manifesto I (1933)

-- In place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer, the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in a cooperative effort to promote social well-being.

--The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and

intelligently cooperate for the common good.

(http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_I)

From Humanist Manifesto II (1973)

-- From the Preface: "Humanism is an ethical process through which we all can move, above and beyond the divisive particulars, heroic personalities, dogmatic creeds, and ritual customs of past religions or their mere negation."

-- From the Closing: "We will survive and prosper only in a world of shared humane values.... At the present juncture of history, commitment to all humankind is the highest commitment of which we are capable." (http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_II)

From Humanist Manifesto III: Humanism and Its Aspirations (2003)

"...Thus engaged in the flow of life, we aspire to this vision with the informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals. The responsibility for our lives and the kind of world in which we live is ours and ours alone."

(http://americanhumanist.org/Humanism/Humanist_Manifesto_III)

From the Amsterdam Declaration 2002 (International Humanist and Ethical Union)

-- Humanism is a lifeway aiming at the maximum possible fulfillment through the cultivation of ethical and creative living and offers an ethical and rational means of addressing the challenges of our times. *Humanism can be a way of life for everyone everywhere.* (Emphasis added) (<http://iheu.org/humanism/the-amsterdam-declaration/>)

From "What Is Humanism?" by Fred Edwords

Former AHA Executive Director and currently the director of the United Coalition of Reason, Fred Edwords has written prolifically about the principles of humanism. In an essay on *What Is Humanism?* he concludes with a keen observation: "So, with modern humanism one finds a lifeway or worldview that is in tune with modern knowledge; is inspiring, socially conscious, and personally meaningful. It is not only the thinking person's outlook but that of the feeling person as well, for it has inspired the arts as much as it has the sciences; philanthropy as much as critique. And even in critique it is tolerant, defending the rights of all people to choose other ways, to speak and to write freely, to live their lives according to their own lights. So the choice is yours. Are you a humanist? You needn't answer 'yes' or 'no.' For it isn't an either-or proposition. Humanism is yours -- to adopt or to simply draw from. You may take a little or a lot, sip from the cup or drink it to the dregs. It's up to you."

(http://americanhumanist.org/humanism/What_is_Humanism)

While many others have voiced the central principles of humanism, few have said it more eloquently than Helen Bennett in her poem "What Humanism Means to Me" in her book, *Humanism, What's That? A Book for Curious Kids* (Prometheus Books, Amherst, NY, 2005).

Humanism means to me
I've got the opportunity

To realize that I am free
To take responsibility.

To me, it doesn't seem so odd
That many people pray to God
Whenever they are feeling low --
It's just the way they have to go.

But when I do not know the way
I do not feel the need to pray.
I use my brain to figure out
What the problem's all about.

I'm grateful that I have my eyes
To see the beauty of the skies,
I'm glad I have my ears to hear
The voices of my friends so dear.

But best of all, my brains the one
That figures out what must be done
To help me run a better race,
To make the world a better place.

For additional essays on Living the Humanist Life, Humanism and Traditional Religion and related issues, see: http://americanhumanist.org/Who_We_Are/About_Humanism

Comparisons and Contrasts: On Common Ground

As noted in the section on social teachings, in many respects Protestantism and humanism share a similar focus. For example, the Baptist perspective that social action is needed to alleviate human suffering, or the Episcopal perspective, social-oriented activities are indicated for several areas including advocacy for human rights, justice and peace. Likewise, we agree with a central thesis in the Lutheran perspective on implementing sound social action programs, with the Methodist Social Creed on working to eliminate economic and social distress and the Presbyterian perspective on combating racism. All of these actions and activities are consistent with the humanist lifestance.

Where do we differ? Although we agree on broad principles of *social action*, there is diversity on some *social issues*. For example, according to a June 2014 report of the Pew Research Center, both the Episcopal Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA) sanction “blessings of same-sex marriages.” However, the American Baptist Church and the Southern Baptist Convention, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and the United Methodist Church prohibit same sex marriages. Source: Pew Research Center (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/18/where-christian-churches-stand-on-gay-marriage/>)

Humanists, on the other hand, support full equality for LGBTQ individuals including the right to marry. As the American Humanist Association has stated: “State and federal laws that prohibit LGBTQ Americans from seeking civil marriage licenses, adopting children, and participating in publicly funded organizations endanger the freedom of expression of personal sexual identity. The AHA commends legislation and litigation that furthers equality in the arena of marriage and family rights for the LGBTQ community.” Source: American Humanist Association’s Key Issues (<http://americanhumanist.org/AHA/Issues>)

Applying humanist principles to social problems

Whether you identify yourself as a theist or non-theist, humanist principles are the basis of social action. Few have stated this more clearly than Lloyd and Mary Morain in *Humanism As The Next Step* (Humanist Press, Washington, DC, revised edition 2008) in which they outlined these four humanist principles that bear on social problems:

- (1) Humanists believe that it is the welfare of the individual and society which count.
- (2) Humanists express their conviction in the value of individuals through a strong stand on human equality.
- (3) Humanists are concerned that we all should be free to think, free to speak as we like so long as it doesn’t harm others and free to act independently.
- (4) Humanists are convinced that through cooperation and the intelligent use of knowledge, we can create a more satisfactory life for all.

The Morains conclude with three additional reflections:

- “Humanism’s active concern for social reforms has sometimes led to its even being called applied Christianity. An evangelical Christian and a humanist often share similar emotions and practical goals in social action, though the philosophical underpinnings are different.”
- “We know that we must and can depend on the intelligent cooperation of individuals of good will to continue to remove conditions and change attitudes which breed poverty, under-employment, hunger, war, violence, disease, fear and prejudice.”
- “At this point, someone may wonder whether humanists believe they have a monopoly on use of a kind heart, common sense, and rationality in social affairs. Certainly not.”

In many ways, we are on “the same page” as you will see in the following quotes, first from the Protestant perspective and then the humanist.

We Are On The Same Page

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” – Martin Luther King Jr.

“People are aware more clearly today that it’s not just a matter of giving money, but it’s about empowering people in the pew to lobby their legislators. We’re not going to solve global poverty unless the industrialized nations of the world take it seriously and contribute a significant chunk of funds, resources, human capital, to making it possible ... It’s about achieving a world where human beings live with dignity, and have what they need to live with dignity.” -- Anglican Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori

“Christianity is, I believe, about expanded life, heightened consciousness and achieving a new humanity.....” -- John Shelby Spong, retired bishop of the Episcopal Church

“Wisdom is not gained by knowing what is right. Wisdom is gained by practicing what is right, and noticing what happens when that practice succeeds and when it fails.”

-- Barbara Brown Taylor, American Episcopal priest, professor, and theologian

“In the unceasing ebb and flow of justice and oppression we must all dig channels as best we may, that at the propitious moment somewhat of the swelling tide may be conducted to the barren places of life.” -- Jane Addams, a leader of the “social Christian” movement in the United States.

“It is clear that we have the capacity to end hunger and reduce poverty in the world. The question is do we have the will?” -- Reverend Mark Hanson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

“Life's fulfillment emerges from individual participation in the service of humane ideals. We aim for our fullest possible development and animate our lives with a deep sense of purpose, finding wonder and awe in the joys and beauties of human existence, its challenges and tragedies, and even in the inevitability and finality of death. Humanists rely on the rich heritage of human culture and the lifestance of Humanism to provide comfort in times of want and encouragement in times of plenty.” -- Humanist Manifesto III, Humanism and Its Aspirations, 2003

“We cannot waste time simply arguing with true believers. We have a higher duty to set forth where all can appreciate ... the ethics we embrace based on the recognition that there is but one human family. We call for the right of all to personal safety, security, personal liberty, privacy, universal health care, equal protection under the law, democratic participation in the formation of laws and all other universal concerns that provide dignity, meaning and purpose in living.”

-- Gerald A. Larue, author of many books including *The Way of Positive Humanism* and *Freethought Across the Centuries*

“The word ‘humanism’ has more than one meaning. Generally, it implies a desire to think for yourself; to ‘do your own thing’; to accept the results of free inquiry, whatever they may be; and to act in accordance with those results, in the light of reason and in co-operation with others, for the promotion of human happiness.” -- Barbara Smoker, British Humanist activist and freethought advocate

“The first resistance to social change is to say it’s not necessary.” Gloria Steinem, American Humanist Association’s Humanist of the Year in 2012

We close with this description of “Values in Action,” a centerpiece of humanist thought and social action:

“Values in Action, or VIA, is the Humanist Community at Harvard’s community service and interfaith initiative. According to Merriam-Webster, the word via means “by way of; through.” This definition recognizes the idea that we do not engage in service merely to benefit others, but because it also accomplishes many different kinds of social good when done in thoughtful ways. VIA’s three-fold goal includes: to better the conditions of life for others through service to humanity; to build alliances between religious and nonreligious individuals and communities; and to combat the misconception that the nonreligious do not contribute to society.”

“We recognize the importance of social action in the here and now, and that it is a good in and of itself. By rooting this collaborative action to benefit others in shared values across lines of difference, we also aspire to achieve mutual understanding and tolerance between those with different -- and often opposing -- metaphysical convictions. In addition, by providing opportunities for Humanists to act upon their values, both as a community of Humanists and in cooperation with people of faith—we demonstrate that the stereotype of non-theists as immoral is false.” (<http://harvardhumanist.org/via/>)

Protestant Non-theism

An interesting and highly relevant footnote is the 2008 finding of the Pew Forum in Religion and Public Life. The study indicated that 8.1% of Americans are members of mainline churches (Baptist, Episcopalian/Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian denominations which also have Evangelical branches.) Most significantly, the data noted that 26% of the adult population in these mainline churches believe that a God is an “Impersonal Force” and that 1% do not hold a belief in God at all. By our account, a conservative estimate is that there are approximately 5.7 million mainline church members who hold a non-traditional belief in God and approximately 230,000 who deny its existence.

What is the next step?

As noted above, *Humanism As the Next Step* outlined four humanist principles regarding social problems. We highly recommend the book as your next reading since it presents a concise overview of the history and principles of modern humanism. We also suggest that you begin to dialogue with humanists in your area on the core issues discussed above and look for additional commonalities which you are certain to find.

Also, if you harbor any doubts about the concept of a divinity (as many do according to the Pew Forum’s data noted above), the next step would be to explore the American Humanist Association’s website (americanhumanist.org/) where you will find a wealth of information about humanism, our local groups, programs, publications and resources of all types for people of all ages. You can, of course, follow the American Humanist Association on Facebook and Twitter and become a member of the AHA. Perhaps you may wish to identify yourself as both a humanist and a Protestant. You surely would not be the first to do so!

For additional information and for answers to any questions you might have about the humanist worldview and life-stance, please contact us at: aha@americanhumanist.org

A final word

Whether you view social action from a Protestant or a humanist perspective, remember that we share many values and strive to achieve similar goals. As Margaret Mead said so eloquently, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” And lastly, as the Amsterdam Declaration 2002 stated, “Humanism can be a way of life for everyone everywhere” to which we would add -- including non-theist, freethinking Protestants.